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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the evaluation of a packet of 48 Adult Basic Education (A.B.E.) instructional units, designed to help the A.B.E. learner read the newspaper with more facility and interest. The extent to which planned activities were carried out (process) and the extent to which program objectives for changing performance of the project subjects were achieved (product) were evaluated. A section of the report on the process evaluation describes project planning and implementation. A pretest/posttest method was used with a control group (given 30 hours of conventional reading instruction) and an experimental group (given 30 hours work on the newspaper units with no other reading instruction). An interest survey and the A.B.E. Student Survey, Follett, 1966, Part 1 (to assess reading level gain) were used to determine the effectiveness of the materials. The same methods and instruments were used with different control and experimental groups to collect data on product evaluation. These are presented and analyzed indicating that use of the units increased students' interests in using the newspaper but resulted in no significant reading level gain. Appended are: a five-item bibliography, the interest survey, attrition and completion chart, anecdotal observations, and proposed changes in the materials. (Author/MS)

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USING THE NEWSPAPER AS AN A.B.E. INSTRUCTIONAL AID

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Adult Basic Education
Black Hawk College
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I. Introduction

We wrote a packet of 48 A.B.E. instructional units, the purpose of which was to help the A.B.E. learner read the newspaper with more facility and interest. We felt that the newspaper, easily accessible, relevant and familiar to the A.B.E. learner, was an ideal material for use in the A.B.E. classroom.

The evaluation of the newspaper instructional packet included both process and product approaches. The process approach considers the extent to which planned activities were carried out. The product evaluation considers the extent to which the program objectives for changing the performance of the project subjects were achieved.

II. Process Evaluation

A. Planning

We thoroughly researched the literature prior to the beginning of this project. We found a few studies (see Bibliography on Appendix A) involving the newspaper in the classroom, but none related to the A.B.E. student and none involved specific reading skills. Several articles have been written which advocate the use of the newspaper as a curriculum material. Johnson (1973) wrote that, "The newspaper today is more readable and more socially involved in readers' lives, and it presents the 'why' as well as the

'how' of the news. Accordingly, newspapers are an inexpensive and popular instructional aid in the classroom." Patrenella (1973) listed many benefits of using the newspaper with undereducated adults: expands vocabulary, provides a model of concise writing, stresses objectivity, provides topics of conversation, motivates reading on an adult level, exposes adults to educated style and grammar, and others.

The next step was to organize the format of the program. We decided on approximately fifty units, the amount we judged we could complete in the four months we allotted for the composition of the units. We decided that each unit would consist of a teacher-learner guidesheet, which would list the objective or objectives of the unit; the reading skill to be stressed; new vocabulary introduced (especially newspaper-related words); suggested approaches to the unit; and possible activities. The worksheet following would contain a page of newspaper information or copy from a Quad-Cities newspaper with accompanying questions. Many of the units were to contain a second worksheet of general questions applicable to the student's own newspaper. With this second worksheet we hoped that the student would transfer his learning of unit material to the actual newspaper copy. We also planned to include in each packet a student progress sheet which would list the title of each unit with a blank for the date completed to be filled in by

the student upon completion of a unit. We also determined that an answer sheet was needed in each packet.

We felt that although the newspaper could be used in many curriculum areas we would concentrate on grade level 3-6 reading skills. We concentrated on developing comprehension skills (main idea, vocabulary, skimming, etc.) and locational skills. Since our primary focus was on teaching students to use the newspaper, we included as much variety of subject matter as possible. We were interested in exposing the students to familiar as well as unfamiliar areas of the newspaper.

Our editorial consultant, David Newquist, edited the copy and was of particular help in advising us as to journalistic content. He advised us to include a glossary of newspaper terminology in the packet.

Final versions of the forty-eight units, an introductory page, a glossary, a student progress sheet and an answer sheet were completed, typed and printed by February, 1975.

B. Implementation

The implementation and evaluation of the material was the second part of the project. We constructed an interest survey with assistance from Dr. Ed Robbins, our evaluation consultant. The interest survey's purpose was to measure any growth of interest in the newspaper (see Appendix B). The Adult Basic Education Student Survey, Follett, 1966, Part I

(See Appendix C) was used to measure any growth in reading level.

Our research model was a pre-test/post-test on the two groups. The two groups of variables were matched on the age, reading grade level, interest inventory score and whether or not the student was bilingual or monolingual (we have a very large group of Spanish-speaking students in our area).

We proposed setting up matched experimental and control groups of twenty-five students. The units were to be taught by the students' own teachers rather than a special teacher in an effort to make the results transferable to other programs where special teachers are not available.

The time devoted to the newspaper units by the experimental group was to be 30 hours during which time these students were to receive no other reading instruction. The students could complete the units before the 30 hours were up. The control group was to be given the A.B.E. Survey and the Interest Survey after 30 hours of conventional reading instruction. At the onset of the project students from both groups were asked if they were willing to participate in a special project to determine the effectiveness of some new materials. The hypotheses of our research were:

1) The experimental group will show a greater interest in the newspaper than the control group using the criteria of time spent reading the newspaper per day, variety of sections read, and number of personal subscriptions.

2) The reading level gain in the experimental group shown on the ABE Student Survey, Follett, 1966, Part I, will be equal to or greater than the control group but not less than 2.5 months after 30 hours of instruction.

In early February, 1975 approximately ninety individuals were given the two surveys. Anyone scoring below 3.0 or at 7.8 (the upper limit of the A.B.E. survey) was eliminated, and from the remaining, two groups of thirty students each were randomly selected. The A.B.E. student survey was found to be inadequate in having a low ceiling since the progress of one scoring 7.8 could not be assessed with the instrument. The nine teachers of the students selected for the experimental and control groups were instructed on how to present the material to the experimental group students and how to keep track of the time used. They were told that a student need not finish the entire program but he should be proficient in each unit before going on to the next one. Teachers were also asked to make assessments of the material and to request comments by the students.

Some of the problems encountered during this phase of our project were due to the very nature of the adult student. Attrition is generally high in adult education as is sporadic attendance. Both these factors affected our samples. In addition, the open classroom learning center from which we drew the majority of our sample had some problems during the period with large classes. A large group of high school dropouts attended the Center. Some of these students tended

to be a distraction both to their peers and to some of the older students involved in the project. With large enrollments, the teachers were not able to spend much time with the newspaper units; and thus, the members of the experimental group worked mainly on their own.

Three area newspapers were available to all students in the experimental group either for use in the program or for spare-time reading.

Students of both groups were retested on the A.B.E. Student Survey and the Interest Survey after they had completed 30 hours of instruction. A strong effort was made to track down as many of the original groups as possible in order to find a reason for attrition (See Appendix D). Our final experimental group consisted of seventeen students, and nineteen were left in the control group.

III. Product Evaluation

A. Description of Data

The product evaluation was based on the following hypotheses:

1) The experimental group will show a greater interest in the newspaper than the control group using the criteria of time spent reading the newspaper per day, variety of sections read, and number of personal subscriptions.

2) The reading level gain in the experimental group shown on the ABE Student Survey, Follett, 1966, Part I, will be equal to or greater than the control group but not less than 2.5 months after 30 hours of instruction.

The tool used to measure the difference in reading scores was the Adult Basic Education Student Survey, Follett, 1966, Part I (Reading Comprehension) [See Appendix C]. We developed a short interest inventory to measure the difference in interest in the newspaper between the groups (See Appendix B). We intended to make the survey as short and as simple as possible to be as "painless" as possible for the students. Checklist type questions were used in the five questions which were intended to assess practical use of the newspaper. The scoring was as follows: Question 1 - one possible point; Question 2 - three possible points; Question 3 - one possible point; Question 4 - twelve possible points; Question 5 - one possible point. A total of eighteen points was the upper limit of the inventory.

The sample was randomly chosen from available students in the Black Hawk College Adult Education program, Moline, Illinois. Moline is one of the so-called Quad-Cities. The Quad-Cities include also Rock Island, Illinois; East Moline, Illinois; and Davenport, Iowa. It is an area dominated by the farm equipment industry. The students in our sample were primarily undereducated adults and teenagers living in lower income areas of Rock Island and attending classes at Alpha Learning Center in Rock Island. Approximately one-third of the original control and experimental groups were Chicano students. The data on the original groups is as follows:

	Sample Mean	Var.	Size	(A) Mean Diff.	(1) Pop. Var. Est.	(B) s.d. pop. diff.	t
Reading Comprehension							
Pretest							
Control Group (III)	5.85	1.23	.30	-.22	1.38	.30	-.73
Experimental Group (I)	6.07	1.44	.30				
Interest Inventory							
Pretest							
Control Group (V)	7.93	29.48	.30	-.57	23.86	1.26	-.45
Experimental Group (VII)	8.50	16.65	.30				

Throughout the two-and-a-half months of the program's implementation, the attrition rate was high as is normal in adult education. We had anticipated final groups of twenty-five students, but actually we had only seventeen left in the experimental group and nineteen in the control group from our original thirty in each.

The data on the scores of the two groups comparing the two pre and post tests are as follows:

M S^2 N M_1-M_2 Est G^2 Est a diff A/B

	Sample Mean	Var.	Size	(A) Mean Diff.	(1) Pop. Var. Est.	(B) s.d. pop. diff.	t
Reading Comprehension							
Pretest Control Group(III)	5.85	1.23	.30	-.22	1.38	.30	-.73
Experi-mental Group(I)	6.07	1.44	.30				
Post-test Control Group(IV)	5.93	4.16	19	-.05	3.67	.64	-.08
Experi-mental Group(II)	5.98	2.69	17				
Interest Inventory							
Pretest Control Group(V)	7.93	29.48	30	-.57	29.86	1.26	-.45
Experi-mental Group(VII)	8.50	16.65	30				
Post-test Control Group(VI)	7.79	27.88	19	-4.15	21.23	1.54	-2.69
Experi-mental Group(VII)	11.94	14.29	17				

(1) $\dfrac{N_1 S_1^2 + N_2 S_2^2}{N_1 + N_2 - 2}$

(2) $\sqrt{\text{Est } G^2 \left(\frac{1}{N_1} + \frac{1}{N_2}\right)}$ or $\sqrt{\text{est } G^2 \dfrac{(N_1 + N_2)}{N_1 N_2}}$

B. Analysis of Data

1) The experimental group will show a greater interest in the newspaper than the control group using the criteria of time spent reading the newspaper per day, variety of sections read, and number of personal subscriptions.

2) The reading level gain in the experimental group shown on the ABE Student Survey, Follett, 1966, Part I, will be equal to or greater than the control group but not less than 2.5 months after 30 hours of instruction.

The analysis of hypothesis 1 T-scores for the interest inventory shows that the experimental group achieved a significant increase at the .05 level. The T-score differential was .45 for the pretest and 2.69 for the post-test.

The analysis of reading comprehension T-scores of hypothesis 2 shows that there was no significant growth in reading grade level in either the control or the experimental group. The T-score differential was .73 in the pretest and .08 in the post-test.

The two other variables used in setting up the original experimental and control groups, age and bilinguality, were not significantly changed in the final groups.

Some of the factors stated previously concerning the learning environment probably contributed heavily to the final results. The overcrowded conditions did not allow the teachers time to spend with the experimental group to fully utilize the potential of the newspaper materials.

The significance in increased interest in the newspaper was reflected in reported increased use of services,

increased time spent reading the newspaper and an increase in subscriptions. One factor which we found was that some of the students bought the paper every day but didn't subscribe since delivered papers were frequently stolen. Any future use of the interest inventory should substitute a question about buying paper daily instead of subscribing to it.

The students and teachers were asked to give comments and suggestions on the newspaper units. Many of the difficulties the students encountered could have been alleviated by more individual attention by the teacher. Many valid criticism were given on the content and level of difficulty and the writers feel that several of the units should be revised before the program is ready for general distribution. Some individual reactions to the program are recorded in Appendix E.

IV. Summary

The implications of the results of the research study indicate that the use of this newspaper program in the adult basic education classroom increases the students' interest in using the newspaper in their daily lives. This research indicated no significant gain in reading level as measured by the Adult Basic Student Survey. However, some difficulties with large classes and a non-structured learning environment may have been a factor. The experimental group members did not receive traditional reading instruction during the 30 hours

they worked on the newspaper units.

Due to some suggestions and comments made by the teachers and students participating in the project, we feel several of the units should be revised (See Appendix F).

The newspaper and other coping tools readily accessible and relevant to the A.B.E. student have a definite place in A.B.E. instruction. Use of materials such as these can make the student more independent and able to make use of the resources his community offers.

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

INTEREST SURVEY

NAME _____

DATE _____

1. I subscribe to a daily newspaper. _____ Yes _____ No

2. I spend the following amount of time each day reading the newspaper.

   _____ None _____ 6-15 minutes

   _____ 1-5 minutes _____ 15 minutes or more

3. I have actually used the classified ads to buy, sell, get a job, etc.

   _____ Yes _____ No

4. I regularly read the following:

   front page _____ sports section _____

   editorial page _____ classified ads _____

   comics _____ business page _____

   horoscope _____ TV listing _____

   weather map _____ movies _____

   society page _____ other (_____) ____

5. I use the display ads to plan my purchases. _____ Yes _____ No

APPENDIX D

ATTRITION AND COMPLETION CHART

Teacher's Name: Robinson

Newspaper Packet

Student's Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Date Test ABE Follett Started	Completed	Interest Inventory Started	Completed	If not participating in project, state reasons why
Experimental Group							
Anna Mae Bryan	3/17	4/22	2/11	4/23	2/11	4/23	
Robin Johnson	3/26	4/2	2/11	4/10	2/11	4/10	
Willie Gillespie	3/17	4/28	2/11		2/11		
Mona Lisa Kidd	3/17	4/28	2/11	4/30	2/11	4/30	
Anna Ramines	3/10	4/24	2/11	5/1	2/11	5/1	
Elizabeth Resalez			2/11		2/11		Dropped after pretest
Control Group							
Wilma Tolson	3/10	4/15	2/11	4/16	2/11	4/16	
Bill Boswell			2/11		2/10		Dropped after pretest
Jean Sawyer	3/10	4/15	2/11	4/16	2/11	4/16	

Teacher's Name: Cherokee French

Student's Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Newspaper Packet Date Test ABE Follett Started	Completed	Interest Inventory Started	Completed	If not participating in project, state reasons why
Control Group							
Glenn Shroeder			2/13		2/13		dropped
Andre Jenkins			2/10		2/13		dropped
Laura Frey			2/10		2/18		left to go to VIP program
Gail Fisher	3/10	4/4	2/10	4/10	2/16	4/10	
Opal White	3/10	4/4	2/10	5/12	2/13	5/12	
Moses Puig	3/10	4/4	2/10	4/10	2/13	4/10	left because of illness
Marcie Althiser			2/1		2/13		dropped - working
Jannie Mae Brown	3/10	4/4	1/10	4/10	2/13	4/10	dropped out after pretest
Sherry Lomas			2/10		2/10		dropped out after pretest
Gary Cromer	3/10	4/4	2/25	4/10	2/25	4/10	left to go to VIP program
Manulita Hughes			2/10		2/10		went back to high school

Teacher's Name: Jeff Wolever

Newspaper Packet

Student's Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Date Test ABE Follett Started	Completed	Interest Inventory Started	Completed	If not participating in project, state reasons why
Experimental Group							
Isidio Zepeda	3/11	3/20	2/10	4/7	2/13	4/7	
Control Group							
Regina Bergheger	3/11	3/20	2/13	4/10	2/13	4/10	
Mary Wheeler	3/11	3/20	2/17	4/10	2/17	4/10	
Debra Staub			2/13	4/10	2/13	4/10	
Ruth Witkofsky			2/10		2/10		Attendance too sporadic (sometimes misses a month or two at a time)

Teacher's Name: Cherokee French

Newspaper Packet

Student's Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Date Test ABE Follett Started	Date Test ABE Follett Completed	Interest Inventory Started	Interest Inventory Completed	If not participating in project, state reasons why
Experimental Group							
Albert Estes	3/10	3/20	2/27	3/24	2/27	3/24	
L. Ronald			1/20		1/30		VIP-went to YMCA dropout program
Joan Hughes			2/17		2/17		went to work
David Crouse	3/10	3/20	2/17		3/17		
Kenny Ward			2/20		2/20		VIP-went to YMCA Dropout program
Carol Loete	3/2	4/10	2/10	4/23	2/17	4/23	
Audry Fisher	3/10	4/7	2/17	4/7	2/17	4/7	
Bill Wakeland	3/10	4/7	2/25	4/10	2/25	4/10	
Joann White			2/9		2/13		dropped after pretest
Brian Boyer			2/25		2/25		VIP-went to YMCA dropout program
Lisa Rodriguez	3/10	4/7	2/25	4/9	2/30	4/9	
Lily Delaney	3/13	3/19	2/10	4/14	2/13	4/14	

Teacher's Name: Rose Marie Wakefield

Newspaper Packet

Student's Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Date Test ABE Follett Started	Completed	Interest Inventory Started	Completed	If not participating in project, state reasons why
Experimental Group							
Manuel Favela	3/12	4/9	2/10	4/15	2/13	4/15	
Ascencian Pavilla	3/10	3/18	2/10	4/10	2/13	4/10	

Teacher's Name: Mary Kozacik

Newspaper Packet

Student's Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Date Test ABE Follett Started	Completed	Interest Inventory Started	Completed	If not participating in project, state reasons why
Experimental Group							
Charlene Milton	4/15	5/2	2/10	5/13	2/13	5/13	
Sherry Scott	3/10	3/26	2/18	4/7	2/18	4/7	
Marie DePorter			2/10		2/13		went to another program
Control Group							
Fred Stewart			2/10	4/15	2/10	4/15	
Grace Ad[illegible]ampong			2/10	4/10	2/10	4/28	

Teacher's Name: Maria VanSpeybroek

Newspaper Packet

Student's Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Date Test ABE Follett Started	Date Test ABE Follett Completed	Interest Inventory Started	Interest Inventory Completed	If not participating in project, state reasons why
Experimental Group							
Barbara Hilligoss	3/10	3/12	2/17	4/2	2/17	4/2	
Twila Morgan			2/17		2/17		heart attack
Louise Fogle	3/10	4/4	2/17	4/19	2/17	4/19	
Control Group							
Jaine Grindley			2/17	4/18	2/17	4/18	
Ann Bragg			2/10	4/23	2/18	4/23	
Delanna Harris			2/10	4/10	2/10	4/10	
David Terain			2/13	4/10	2/13	4/10	
Dora Perez			2/17	4/10	2/17	4/10	

Teacher's Name: Tony Tefoya

Newspaper Packet

tudent's Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Date Test ABE Follett Started	Completed	Interest Inventory Started	Completed	If not participating in project, state reasons why
xperimental Group							
artin Mendosa			2/13		2/13		visited Mexico after taking pretest. returned too late to be part of project.
ontrol Group							
lbert Favela			2/13	5/12	2/13	5/12	

Teacher's Name: Katy Blaha

Newspaper Packet

Student's Name	Date Started	Date Completed	Date Test ABE Follett Started	Completed	Interest Inventory Started	Completed	If not participating in project, state reasons why
Experimental Group							
Refugio Mache	3/11	5/10	2/24	5/15	2/25	5/15	
Control Group							
Alex Esparza	3/11	4/27	2/25	4/30	2/24	4/30	
Pedro Morales			2/25		2/26		left program after pretest

APPENDIX E

ANECDOTAL OBSERVATIONS

1. One of the students who was, in general, hard to interest in any reading materials and whose attendance was spotty worked diligently on the newspaper packet. His attendance became more regular during the project and dropped off when the project was completed.

2. One woman with 8 children has worked diligently to improve her primary reading level all year. She found some of the newspaper materials very difficult. She and the reading group at her table were especially enthusiastic about the display and classified advertising. They habitually went through the morning paper to check out grocery prices and garage sales.

3. A young woman under psychiatric care demanded much individual attention at school (even if she had to yell at the top of her lungs to get it). She liked being picked to do something special. She worked quietly, including thoughtful comments as she answered each unit's questions. She enjoyed the materials but swore when she was asked to take the post-tests.

APPENDIX E (cont'd)

4. The students at the center utilized the newspapers every day. They continually asked for them and were disappointed when the papers stopped in June at the end of the project.

5. The E.S.L. teachers found that many of the units were difficult for the E.S.L. student to understand individually, mainly because of comprehension problems with journalism-related vocabulary. They did, however, in general benefit from the comprehension questions over newspaper copy and did read some section of the newspaper daily.

APPENDIX F

PROPOSED CHANGES

We recommend the following changes based upon comments from students and observations of teachers involved in the testing.

5A - Omit middle column on Worksheet 5A. Shorten the number of words to be looked up in Column A to 20. The same with Column B.

6B - Shorten Worksheet 6B to five exercises instead of eight. Also give an example (students generally experience difficulty with this exercise).

7B - Shorten Worksheet 7B to five exercises. An example would be helpful. Students generally experience difficulty with this exercise.

Units 8 through 14 - Recommend that these units receive additional teacher input. The concepts of "who, what, where, when and why" are difficult for many students to understand. We might have too many units stressing the traditional five who, what, where, when, and why lead. In general, modern journalism is veering away from the traditional news story and using more feature-type leads.

9B - Students in general found this worksheet boring. We don't, however, feel that it should be deleted altogether. The exercise might be more meaningful if students were paired together or if the exercices were done as a group activity.

31B - Instead of having students find 4 columns, ask them to find 2.

42 - Many students found this exercise too difficult to do alone. We recommend much teacher aid.